

Kessler, Ellen

From: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC [Stephanie.Strength@wdc.usda.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 28, 2009 11:17 AM
To: Lilley, Bliss; Collins, Carly
Subject: FW: Comment on USDA/RUS EIS for CapX2020 La Crosse Project

Importance: High

From: jtrodude@charter.net [mailto:jtrodude@charter.net]
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2009 9:13 AM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Subject: Comment on USDA/RUS EIS for CapX2020 La Crosse Project
Importance: High

Dear Ms. Strength:

Below are my comments, concerns and perspectives on the USDA/RUS EIS for the CapX2020 La Crosse Project. I am a concerned citizen who lives in La Crescent, MN and works as a natural resource professional in La Crosse, WI, so I see the issue from both sides of the state line. I think if Maryland Power's request is granted, it will result in unsound environmental policy along a number of fronts (wildlife conservation, recreation and aesthetics, and possibly most important, additional greenhouse gases from the coal power generation it will enable in the Dakotas), as well as generating additional unfair and unjustified expenses to taxpayers. Below is a summary of key points to include in the comments on the EIS. We need to put any resources we have into localizing the existing power grid to modernize it. We do NOT need to be transmitting power inefficiently across vast distances with power lines that are potential health risks to humans and animals and disrupt migration and the scenic landscape. There are much better alternatives now available to distribute electrical power and we should be putting our resources into developing those, not what CapX2020 in general is proposing.

- I-202-001** | 1. Updated forecasts of electric peak demand do not support the need for the CapX2020 ultra high voltage power line projects, including the La Crosse Project;
- I-202-002** | 2. The CapX2020 La Crosse ultra high voltage power line will cause environmental harm -- including visual impacts in scenic corridors, health risks due to electro-magnetic fields, decline in property values, loss of prime agricultural land, risks to rare and endangered species, fragmentation of habitat in a national wildlife refuge, and bird mortality along the Mississippi flyway.
- I-202-003** | 3. The La Crosse Project should be considered with other CapX2020 power lines which create the potential for transmission of coal power east from the Dakotas to load centers east of Minnesota. The environmental consequences of coal and coal pollution due to the La Crosse line result in additional adverse impacts of the project.
- I-202-004** | 4. Conservation, local generation and local transmission can solve any local reliability issues at a much lower cost to ratepayers without damaging the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge, Scenic Byways and other protected natural resources that would be impaired by the La Crosse Project and without providing transmission from distant coal plants;
- I-202-005** | 5. Taxpayers should not finance any portion of the CapX2020 La Crosse Project through the USDA Rural Utilities Service.

Thank you for your time and for incorporating my comments into the EIS.

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I-202-001

Your comment has been noted. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will describe, in detail, project purpose and need. The justification document which has been accepted by the RUS is the Alternative Evaluation study which is available at:
<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

I-202-002

Your comment has been noted. Potential impacts to human and livestock health and safety with regard to EMF, visual resources, socioeconomic issues including property values, rare species, and agricultural resources will all be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

I-202-003

Your comment has been noted. Due to the transmission grid's interconnected nature as well as to electricity's nature - it's generally difficult to identify a specific source of electricity on the grid.

The proposed CapX2020 transmission lines will serve the region's expected growth and help begin to meet Minnesota's Renewable Energy Standard (RES), which requires utilities to deliver 25 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025 (Xcel Energy is mandated to deliver 30 percent by 2020, with 25 percent from wind). Most of that energy comes from wind turbines.

I-202-004

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La Crescent, MN 55947

Your comment has been noted. Alternatives to the project will be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

I-202-005

Your comment has been noted. Dairyland Power Cooperative, one of the CapX2020 utilities, has requested financial assistance from USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS), for Dairyland's anticipated 11 percent ownership interest in the proposed Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kilovolt transmission line project. RUS has determined that its funding of Dairyland's ownership interest is a federal action and therefore subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). RUS is the lead agency for both NEPA and Section 106 review.